

**Virginia Commission for the Arts  
Minutes  
March 29, 2006  
Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History**

Members Present: Dr. Lucius Ellsworth, Chair; David Briggs, Gary Grant, Susan Hirschbiel; Bonita Lestina; E. A. McMath, Roddy Moore, Jackie Stone, Rod Taylor; Beth Temple; Will Trinkle; and Deborah Valentine

Members Absent: Eve Wilson

Staff Attending: Peggy Baggett, Tatjana Franke Beylotte; and Foster Billingsley

Guests: Arlyne McDowell, Danville Area Association for the Arts & Humanities; Lynne Bjarnesen, Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History

**Introduction**

Dr. Ellsworth, Chair of the Commission, called the meeting to order at 8:38 a.m. He welcomed the Commissioners and thanked Gary Grant for his good work in planning the reception and dinner on the previous evening. He noted that such events are important for raising the visibility of the Commission around the state with both local arts leaders and with members of the General Assembly.

Dr. Ellsworth congratulated Peggy Baggett on her re-appointment as Director of the Commission.

He then noted that Amy Krawczyk has left the staff of the Commission and will be missed. He thanked Tatjana Beylotte and Foster Billingsley for stepping in to do extra work during the staff transition.

He reviewed the schedule of events for the June 5-7 Commission meeting in Abingdon.

**Review of Advocacy Efforts**

Dr. Ellsworth reviewed the advocacy work of the Commission and Virginians for the Arts over the past few months. He thanked the members of the Commission for their work in talking to and writing Governor Warner about more funding for the arts. He noted the success of Virginians for the Arts in placing guest editorials and letters to the editor in most of the daily newspapers of the state. He reminded the Commissioners that they should continue to take a lead role in the advocacy effort.

A general discussion followed about the next steps in advocacy in which the following points were made.

C The message about the need for a strong cultural infrastructure seems to be working with

some legislators, particularly with the intense focus on the problems with the transportation infrastructure.

- C The Commission should explore ways to get the message of such outstanding speakers as Ben Cameron and Sir Ken Robinson to a larger audience, including elected officials.
- C An Arts Caucus in the General Assembly would be an effective tool for raising the visibility of the arts.
- C The Commission and Virginians for the Arts should intensify efforts to identify an active arts advocate in every legislative district.
- C It is important to encourage more legislators to attend the reception as part of the Art Works for Virginia conference. Perhaps there could be a celebrity of some type invited to the reception who would be a draw for attendance.

There was agreement that the Commission should create an advocacy committee of the board to work in partnership with Virginians for the Arts on the next advocacy steps.

### **Status of the State Budget**

Peggy Baggett reported that the Commission could not adopt a grants budget for 2006-2007 or take action on any proposals for the next fiscal year until the General Assembly takes action on the overall state budget. She presented an outline of the possible use of any additional grant funds, noting that no decisions would be made on the allocation of funds until the June Commission meeting. There was consensus that the staff proposal addressed the priorities of the Commission.

Gary Grant made the suggestion that the Commission publicize the new Technology Enhancements Grants to the legislators to demonstrate how the state funding is helping organizations improve their business practices.

### **Professional Development Initiative**

Peggy Baggett reported on the first workshops of the new professional development initiative being conducted in partnership with the Virginians for the Arts Foundation. There were workshops on effective public relations strategies held in Harrisonburg and Culpeper with the Arts Council of the Valley and the Windmore Foundation for the Arts serving as local hosts. Response from the participants was highly favorable. Dates for the next two public relations workshops will be announced soon. The Growing Audiences Roundtable has been scheduled for July 11-13 in Richmond.

### **Discussion of the Role of Major Arts Institutions within the Cultural Infrastructure**

In introducing this section of the agenda, Lu Ellsworth noted that the Commission had decided to focus on one or two fields of the arts at each quarterly meeting, other than the June grant review meeting. These discussions will increase the knowledge of the Commission board members about these fields and help to identify issues of concern for the next update of the strategic plan.

In the discussion there was agreement that the major arts institutions are essential to the overall cultural infrastructure, that the Commission should be concerned about the stability and growth of these organizations, but that the Commission should not take responsibility for the

survival of each of the existing major arts organizations of the state.

There was consensus that no changes should be made in the funding formula for the major arts institutions for 2006-2007.

There was discussion of whether the Commission should change its definition of a major arts institution from being based primarily on budget size to include other criteria. Points in the discussion included the following.

- C Should the Commission be more specific in its expectations of high management standards for the major arts institutions?
- C Should these organizations be evaluated in part on their leadership on behalf of the arts as a whole in their communities and across the state?

There was agreement that there is wide variation among the existing major arts institutions in their efforts to support other smaller arts organizations in their communities, to increase access to the arts, and to be leaders in advocacy for the arts as a whole.

There was agreement that an increased level of funding for the major arts institutions from the Commission should be tied to the leadership activities of these organizations. Organizations should not be penalized for not undertaking this leadership role, however, particularly in light of the fragile status of several of the existing major arts institutions. The Commission could possibly provide incentive funds added to the annual General Operating Support grants for those organizations able and willing to be leaders within their communities.

The Commission staff was directed to prepare a report for discussion at the June Commission meeting on how to evaluate the leadership role of major arts institutions and how to provide incentives to encourage this role by the large budget organizations. The suggestion was made that there be a roundtable meeting with the leaders of the major arts organizations in connection with the 2007 Art Works for Virginia conference to help define the appropriate leadership role for these organizations.

### **Role of Performing Arts Presenters within the Cultural Infrastructure**

The Commissioners reviewed the report from Jeri Goldstein on the survey of performing arts presenters and the proposal from the newly formed Virginia Presenters Network that was handed out at the start of the meeting. In the discussion the following points were made.

- C Virginia presenters who use the Commission's Tour Directory would like to see more variety.
- C Having a greater variety of performers in the Directory will not, however, solve the problem of reduced budgets for the presenters and fewer performances for the public.
- C The North Carolina Presenters Consortium is a wonderful model of how to strengthen the performing arts presenting field, but Virginia currently lacks many of the key elements that make the NC model effective.

There was not consensus among the Commissioners of whether to continue restricting the Tour Directory to performers based in Virginia.

There was consensus that the services for presenters recommended by Jeri Goldstein are important. Roddy Moore made a motion to hire a private contractor, preferably to work from the Commission office, for a three year period to provide services to the presenters of the state, to encourage more performers to apply to be listed in the Tour Directory, and to distribute the Directory more widely throughout the state. The motion was seconded and approved 11-yes with one absention.. The Commission staff will prepare a proposal for consideration at the June Commission meeting. David Briggs stated that he was uncomfortable in voting for the motion without a clear statement of the anticipated benefits and means of evaluating the success of this initiative and therefore abstained.

### **National Arts Advocacy**

Lu Ellsworth reported on the recent board meeting of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and on National Arts Advocacy Day. Key points from this report were the following.

- C All board members of state arts agencies from around the country are encouraged to join the affiliates program of NASAA.
- C NASAA will hold a leadership institute in Anchorage, Alaska, in September that is open to all state arts agency board members.
- C The national arts advocacy effort has been effective. There is little open opposition in Congress to funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.
- C The President has proposed level funding for the NEA. Since administrative costs are going up, there will be some reductions in funding for the grant programs, including the Partnership Agreements with the state arts agencies.

### **Report of the Arts in Education Committee**

Beth Temple reported on the actions of the Arts in Education Committee which had met on the previous day.

The Committee reconsidered the decision made in December on the Teacher Incentive Grant from Tina Oberg of the Hamilton-Holmes Middle School in King William County and awarded \$300 for the project.

The Committee approved the addition of two artists to the AIE Artist Roster - Slash Coleman for a two year period and Lola Davis-Jones for four years.

The Committee had discussed ways to improve the pool of Teacher Incentive Grant applications. The instructions for the application form will be edited to put more emphasis on artistic quality and to simplify the application for teachers.

### **Election of the Nominating Committee**

Lu Ellsworth opened the floor for nominations to serve on the Nominating Committee. Beth Temple made a motion that the three Commissioners whose terms will end in June should serve as the Nominating Committee. Bonita Lestina made a motion to close the nominations. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Susan Hirschbiel then made a motion to elect E. A. McMath, Gary Grant, and Roddy Moore to the Nominating Committee. The motion

was seconded and passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:02 p.m.